

Montgomery County, Maryland

Commission on Aging

Annual Report
2011

Remember—Seniors Count!



March 2012



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Photographs have been provided courtesy of Bruce Adams, Director of Montgomery County's Office of Community Partnerships, Commission on Aging members Judy Welles and Marcia Pruzan

Letter from the Chair of the Commission on Aging



COMMISSION ON AGING

February 22, 2012

The Honorable Isiah Leggett
The Honorable Roger Berliner



The Montgomery County Commission on Aging is pleased to present its Annual Report for 2011. The Report describes the activities of the Commission as an influential voice advising County government on issues affecting older adults, as well as advocating at the local, state, and federal levels for policies and programs that contribute to successful aging in place in our community.

The Commission takes seriously its obligation to be a responsible voice for older adults in the community. Therefore, the Commission continues its commitment to publicly speak out in support of programs considered essential to the lives of an aging population. Therefore, we wish to submit in this Annual Report the Commission's proposal for a comprehensive vision and agenda. Entitled "*A Community for a Lifetime: Proposal for a Senior Agenda*," the Commission's document contains the following vision: ***Montgomery County will be a Community for a Lifetime - a place for older adults to live safe, healthy and vital lives.***

In keeping with the Commission's commitment to address the needs of older adults, the document identifies seven areas that are of critical importance to an over-65 population that is currently more than 119,500 and projected to grow to nearly 190,000 in 2030. The areas include: transportation; housing; socialization and leisure; health and wellness; employment; and security and safety. It is the Commission's hope that the Senior Agenda will be adopted by the County Executive and endorsed by the County Council as the Policy that will provide a blueprint for action.

The Commission thanks both the County Executive, Mr. Leggett, who has demonstrated his strong commitment to the concerns of our aging population, and the County Council for its willingness to support and maintain programs that serve older adults in the County.

Finally, the Commission once again wants to express its deepest appreciation to two individuals who represent the many outstanding social service professionals working for the County: Dr. John (Jay) Kenney, Chief, Aging and Disability Services, and Dr. Odile Brunetto, Director, Area Agency on Aging and Executive Secretary of the Commission, both of the Department of Health and Human Services. Each provides the Commission with exceptional support, guidance, and wise counsel. Their contributions are invaluable to both the Commission and to older adults in the County.

Sincerely,

Elaine Kotell Binder, Chair

Department of Health and Human Services

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Montgomery County Commission on Aging

COMMISSION OFFICERS

Chair: Elaine Kotell Binder
First Vice Chair: Grace Whipple
Second Vice Chair: Beth Shapiro
Secretary: Marcia Pruzan
Treasurer: Vivien Hsueh

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Aging in Place and Community: Beth Shapiro, Grace Whipple
Communications and Community Outreach: Spencer Schron, Judy Welles
Health and Wellness : Tammy Duell, Judith Levy
Public Policy: Jack Sprague, Robert Tiller
Aging in Place and Community: Beth Shapiro, Grace Whipple

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES STAFF

Odile Brunetto, Aging and Disability Services
Shawn Brennan, Aging and Disability Services

LIAISONS

Department of Public Libraries: Christopher Borawski, Mildred Nance
Department of Recreation: Jeff Bourne, Phil Smakula
Department of Transportation: Joy Barrow
Office of Community Partnerships: Austin Heyman
Office of Fire and Rescue: Matthew Kelleher
Commission on Health: Sam Korper
Housing Opportunities Commission: Pazit Aviv, Gail Gunod
Commission on People with Disabilities: John Miers, Seth Morgan
Montgomery County Arts Council: Les Trachtman
Vital Living Committee: Patricia Lesnick
City of Rockville Commission on Aging: Ciriaco Gonzales

COMMISSION MEMBERS

Alicia Bazan Jimenez	Kenneth Montgomery
Elaine Kotell Binder	Barbara Mulitz
Myrna Cooperstein	Nhora Murphy
Morton A. Davis	Mona Negm
Tammy Duell	Joseph Petrizzo
Elizabeth Brooks-Evans	Marcia Pruzan
Paul Del Ponte	Rudolph (Rudy) Oswald
John Honig	Spencer Schron
Vivien Hseuh	Beth Shapiro
Charles Kauffman	John (Jack) Sprague
Miriam Keltz	Robert Tiller
John J. Kenney, Executive Liaison	Judith Welles
Judith Levy	Grace Whipple
Leslie Y. Marks	



Enabling Legislation

The Commission on Aging, established in 1974, operated under the auspices of the County Council until August 1987, when its operation was transferred to the Executive Branch. Chapter 27, Article III of the Montgomery County Code created the Commission on Aging under the declared public policy of the County to:

- Improve conditions of the aging or elderly in the county;
- Work toward the elimination of restrictions that impede older citizens from full participation in the mainstream of community life; and
- Assist and stimulate all levels of government and the community to be more responsive to the needs of the county's older residents.

In addition, the Commission on Aging serves as the Advisory Council to the Area Agency on Aging as described in the federal Older Americans Act.

Members of the Commission are appointed by the County Executive subject to confirmation by the County Council. Under a section specifying powers and duties of the Commission, there are several provisions outlining a broad spectrum of powers. The following two subsections provide a good example of the breadth of the Commission's power:

The Commission shall have the power...

- (a) To research, assemble, analyze and disseminate pertinent data and educational materials relating to activities and programs which will assist in meeting the needs and solving the problems of the aging; to cooperate with public and private agencies, organizations, and individuals in identifying and solving the problems of the aging; and to develop and conduct, as appropriate, in cooperation with county government and other services and programs dealing with the problems and needs of the aging.
- (g) To advise and counsel the residents of the county, the County Council, the County Executive and the various departments of county, state and federal governments on matters involving the needs of the aging, and to recommend such procedures, programs or legislation as it may deem necessary and proper to promote and ensure equal rights and opportunities for all persons, regardless of their age. ■

Commission Membership

The Commission on Aging consists of no fewer than 18 members appointed by the County Executive, subject to confirmation by the County Council. Members must be county residents of whom a majority shall be age 60 and older. Members include: those who participate in or who are eligible to participate in programs under the Older Americans Act; local elected officials or their designees, individuals who are or who have been active in government, business, industry, labor, community service, religious, social services, education, the professions; and representatives of major organizations or agencies concerned with aging. ■

Sign in for Senior news at Montgomery County's electronic newsletter subscription system at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/eSubscription





Area Agency on Aging

The Area Agency on Aging (AAA), headed by Dr. Odile Brunetto, is responsible for the provision of a continuum of home and community-based services and provides staff support to the Commission on Aging. In conjunction with community partners, the AAA is actively involved in administering County and state grant awards to contractors for public education/outreach, networking, and referrals.

AAAs were established under the federal Older Americans Act (OAA) in 1973 to respond to the needs of Americans ages 60 and older in every local community. The AAA strives to develop a range of options that allow older adults to choose the home and community-based services and living arrangements that suit them best. The AAA is part of a national network of over 670 AAAs established under the OAA to improve the quality of life for older persons by creating a network that maintains a holistic view of aging. The AAA are mandated to "foster the development and implementation of comprehensive and coordinated systems to serve older individuals..."

Highlights of AAA Activities in Fiscal Year 2011:

- Staff from the Aging and Disability Services Line, a Maryland Access Point, answered nearly 21,000 calls to assist seniors, persons with disabilities and their families, providing access to information and needed short- and long-term care services offered both by the County and our non-profit partners.
- The AAA's Long-Term Care Ombudsman program managed 365 complaints with a resolution rate of 96.8%. A cadre of 55 trained volunteers team up with our five staff members in 34 nursing homes and 183 assisted living facilities.
- The Public Guardianship program served 88 persons in need of protective services as determined by the courts.
- The Nurses Team conducted 1,666 Adult Evaluation and Review Services (AERS) evaluations,

which are mandated to enable eligible persons to receive community-based, Medicaid-funded services.



DHHS Director Uma S. Ahluwalia with COA members Elizabeth Brooks-Evans and Mona Ngem

- The Health Wellness program successfully recruited additional volunteers to lead Bone Builders Exercise classes on bone health and falls prevention, increasing the number of free classes offered in the County with a cadre of 33 trained volunteers, and engaging 195 seniors weekly.

- This program also conducted several seminars for more than 30 people on the topics of End of Life Care and Advance Directives in anticipation of implementation of the Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (MOLST) legislation,

- A successful Falls Prevention Campaign was conducted in September 2011, engaging numerous partners in our County.
- The Senior Nutrition program served 5,629 clients and provided more than 380,000 meals, both in congregate sites and through home-delivered meals.
- The Older Adult Waiver Program served 482 Medicaid-eligible seniors. More than 1,700 eligible Montgomery County residents in need of this program are on the State registry.
- In partnership with the Beacon newspaper, several outreach efforts were undertaken to inform seniors and their families about helpful services in the County.
- The AAA also participated in the activities of the County Senior Subcabinet and the work of the established workgroups supporting the Subcabinet's work.
- Seniors Today, a monthly cable show, co-produced with the COA, celebrated its 100th show. ■



Commission Activities and Priorities

Members of the Commission on Aging (COA) have brought their expertise and dedication to COA activities through their commitment to advancing an agenda for the County's older adults and through participation in Commission meetings, committee work, and outreach to the community.

One key Commission accomplishment of this past year was its approval of a document entitled "A Community for a Lifetime: A Proposal for a Senior Agenda." This Agenda lays out the following vision: **Montgomery County will be a Community for a Lifetime—a place for older adults to live safe, healthy, and vital lives.**

The document proposes a County policy that demonstrates a commitment to older adults. It will be submitted to the County Executive, who is a firm supporter of seniors and the Commission.

Mr. Leggett responded positively to the *Call for Action* that the Commission issued in August 2010. The *Call for Action* asked for the development of a comprehensive Senior Agenda, the creation of a transportation plan for seniors, and the appointment of a Commission representative to the Senior Subcabinet.

At a meeting with Commission leaders, the County Executive agreed that the COA would sit as an ex-officio member on the Senior Subcabinet. In addition, he asked the COA to take the lead in facilitating the development of a County-sponsored, community-wide senior transportation plan to be developed in partnership with the Department of Transportation. Although limited progress has been made on the latter to date, the Commission intends to make this a priority for the coming year.

Educational Activities

A number of local and national leaders have made presentations at Commission meetings, providing Commission members with important knowledge about issues of concern. At its Annual Meeting, the Commission heard from a futurist, David Pearce Snyder, who spoke about the knowable future—demographic, econometric, and technological forecasts that can be made based on available facts. He predicted a "rendezvous with austerity" that will affect senior living and the need to adapt to the changes that will occur. County Executive, Isiah Leggett, and HHS Department Director, Uma S. Ahluwalia, also spoke at this meeting, providing Commissioners with insights from their perspectives.

Other County leaders who spoke at Commission meetings were Gabriel Albornoz, Director of the Recreation Department, Richard Nelson, Director of the Housing and Community Development Department, Rollin Stanley, Executive Director of the Maryland-National Park and Planning Commission, and Bruce Adams, Director of the Office of Community Partnerships. Mr. Albornoz updated Commission members on Recreation Department efforts to re-institute programming for seniors that had been reduced in prior years. Both Mr. Nelson and Mr. Stanley talked to the Commission about housing and zoning policies that are in the process of being updated. Mr. Adams, along with members of his staff and staff from DHHS, described County efforts to reach out to our diverse communities.

Finally, the Commission was privileged to have as a guest speaker Dr. Fernando Torres-Gil, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at the UCLA School of Public Affairs. Dr. Torres-Gil is a nationally known expert in the fields of health and long-term care, the politics of aging, social policy, ethnicity and disability. His presentation was a direct result of the work of the Communications and Community Outreach Committee around the need for outreach to older adults in the many diverse communities that exist in the County.

As a result of these presentations and the excellent work of Commission committees (whose activities are described elsewhere in this Report), the Commission has increased its knowledge base about issues of concern and has expanded its efforts to influence County policy in a variety of areas.



County Executive Isiah Leggett, Dr. Fernando Torres-Gil, and COA Chair Elaine Binder



COA member Vivien Hsueh, with Aging and Disability Services Director John (Jay) Kenney



Odile Brunetto with outgoing COA Chair Elaine Binder and incoming COA Chair Judy Welles



Delegate Kathleen Dumais, and Senator Nancy King

External Relations

The Commission held a Stakeholders Meeting during the year in order to promote its *Call to Action* and to encourage collaboration with organizations and businesses that provide services to older adults. In addition, the Commission continues to have liaison relationships with departments that provide services to older adults, as well as other County committees and commissions sharing an interest in the needs of seniors. Of importance during this past year has been a collaborative effort between the Commission on Aging and the Commission on People with Disabilities on the issue of parking. The Commission sent a letter to the County Executive supporting enforcement of disabled parking restrictions, and COA representatives attended the County's launch event for its new program, "Respect the Space." The Commission also has worked closely with the Commission on Health and the Recreation Advisory Committee during this past year.

Commission members are involved in the Grass Roots Organization for the Welfare of Seniors (GROWS) the, Transportation Providers Network, The End-of-Life Coalition, and the Vital Living Network. The Commission also participates on the County Executive's Senior Sub-cabinet and several workgroups that emerged from the Senior Summit. The Commission continued its advocacy efforts with United Seniors of Maryland and participated on its legislative committee. The Commission considers all of these efforts as an extension of its goal of ensuring that County Government, State Legislators, and the Community "*Remember: Seniors Count.*"

Summer Study Sessions

Each year during the summer the Commission sets aside its normal activities and conducts research on topics that are of concern to older adults. The in-depth study of these topics provides Commission members with information that assists them in defining priorities, taking action, and making appropriate recommendations to the County and State. Housing and Mental Health were the two issues identified for the 2011 Summer Study session. Commission members selected these topics at the Annual Meeting as a result of information gathered from presentations at Commission meetings and through COA members' one-on-one meetings with Council members and staff.

However, it is important to note several areas of importance. The Commission makes a concerted effort to broaden participation in Summer Study by reaching out to experts in the community. The

Health and Wellness Committee has already begun implementing the recommendations from the Mental Health Summer Study, including participation in coalitions concerned with senior mental health issues. Following the Housing Summer Study, a Task Force was appointed by the Chair to provide input to the upcoming rewrite of the County's Housing Policy and to the extent appropriate, issues related to upcoming changes in the zoning laws. As a result, the Commission was able to submit comments on proposed changes to the Housing Policy of the County. The reports from both Summer Study sessions, as well as that of the Housing Task Force are provided elsewhere in this report.



Budget Priorities

The Commission testified at hearings held by the County Executive, the County Council, the Director of DHHS, and the Community Development Advisory Committee on issues related to the 2012 budget. In all cases, we reiterated our concerns for 119,500 County residents ages 65 and older and noted that by 2030, that number is expected to increase by nearly 40 percent to 189,489.

The Commission framed its testimonies around two populations—those seniors who are vulnerable and at-risk and those low- and middle-income seniors whose continued independence also depends on certain services. We continued to stress, as we have in the past, how imperative it is to consider the overall needs of older adults and the cumulative effect of program reductions, rather than focusing on individual programs. We also emphasized the importance of preventive services as significant cost-saving measure for the future.

The Commission identified as its priorities: preserving safety net services; and maintaining the core services that are essential for frail, vulnerable seniors. In particular, the COA expressed grave concerns about the proposed reduction in providing Home Care Services. While senior center programs and Ride-on fares were not facing reductions, the Commission felt it was imperative to comment on their importance to older adults, particularly from a preventive perspective. In short, we urged County leadership to “Do No Harm!” The Commission was gratified when the County Council restored \$100,000 for Home Care Services. In their individual meetings with members of the County Council, Commission members stressed the importance of this program, and they believe that their advocacy on this issue, in conjunction with that of collaborating organizations, were responsible for this restoration.

Legislative Priorities

The Commission was particularly successful in its advocacy efforts on behalf of older adults at the State level. Led by its Public Policy Committee, Commission members testified in Annapolis and actively worked with legislators for the passage of three bills that were Commission priorities: Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (MOLST); Communities for a Lifetime; and a bill protecting the privacy of attendees at senior centers.

The Commission held a successful Legislative Breakfast in November 2011 in preparation for its advocacy efforts in the 2012 State Assembly. A key concern for the Commission in the year ahead is passage of legislation preventing financial abuse of seniors. In addition, Commission members discussed with legislators the importance of State funding for Medicaid, transportation, and housing programs for older adults in the County.

Conclusion

Commission members are committed to ensuring that older adults can live safely in the County. This past year, as part of the County’s promotion of volunteerism, Commission members tracked their hours for one month. In that month alone they spent 500 hours on Commission-related activities. This is in addition to the many hours most Commissioners spend volunteering for other organizations. Montgomery County is fortunate to have such a dedicated corps of volunteers to assist County leaders in creating a

Community for a Lifetime.■

Legislative Breakfast Participants



Commission Member Jack Sprague



Senator James Gilchrist



Delegate Benjamin Kramer



SENIOR AGENDA

A Community for a Lifetime : A Proposal for a Senior Agenda Submitted by the Montgomery County Commission on Aging

In August 2010, the Montgomery County Commission on Aging (COA) issued a **Call to Action** in which the COA asked that the County adopt a **Senior Agenda** to plan over the next five years for the significant increase in County residents over age 65. The following **Senior Agenda** represents the Commission's perspective on how the County can become a place for older adults to live safe, health and vital lives.

Montgomery County will be a Community for a Lifetime— a place for older adults to live safe, healthy and vital lives.

Commitment to Older Adults

- The County will have a policy against ageism, including age stereotyping.
- Older adults are a valuable economic, cultural, and social resource and will be included in all County planning activities at the Executive and Council levels.
- Planning related to older adults will include consideration of diversity, inclusiveness, and intergenerational elements.
- Demographic data about older adults will be maintained, analyzed, and incorporated into planning.
- Resource information relevant to older adults will be distributed and accessible.
- The County will have a plan to address options for aging in place and alternatives.
- The County will promote public-private partnerships that contribute to implementation of this Agenda.

Transportation

Vision: *Montgomery County will have public and private transportation and mobility systems that enable older adults to go where they want to go, when they want to go and how they want to get there.*

- Affordable senior transportation will be a priority.
- Planning will include in-neighborhood options to make transportation accessible and to make affordable escorted transportation available.
- Planning will encompass the needs and safety of both pedestrians and those who do not drive.
- Transportation planning will include a focus on the needs of older adults as they become less able to drive.

Housing

Vision: *Montgomery County will promote choices of dwelling types so that as the needs and preferences of older adults change, they can age in place, downsize, choose rental or ownership, or find housing with the appropriate level of supportive services without having to leave the community.*

- Affordable senior housing will be promoted and made available.
- Housing options and alternatives will be part of County planning efforts.
- Visitable and livable options will be included in County planning.
- New and existing construction and redevelopment will consider the needs of both current and prospective older residents.
- The County will assist and encourage efforts to create supportive communities such as villages, co-housing and other options.
- Redevelopment planning will encourage walkable communities.
- Planning efforts will include public-private partnerships as an option to providing housing suitable for older adults.



Socialization and Leisure

Vision: *Montgomery County will encourage and support vital living of older adults by providing opportunities for physical, mental and social interaction.*

- Recreation programs will facilitate socialization and other activities that integrate health and wellness.
- Recreation programs will be available and easily accessible to older adults throughout the County, particularly in areas where there are no senior centers.
- Lifelong learning opportunities will be available.
- Libraries will be a location of activities and resources for older adults.
- Active efforts will be made to engage older adults as volunteers.

Health and Wellness

Vision: *Montgomery County will expand public health and prevention programs that promote physical, mental, social and environmental health for older adults.*

- Medical care for older adults will be available, accessible, and affordable.
- Healthcare providers will be encouraged to accept private and public health insurance including Medicare and Medicaid.
- Direct services and educational programs to plan for serious illness and to manage chronic diseases including promotion of self-management programs will be a priority.
- Access to hearing and dental care will be available.
- Nutrition support including education and meals will be provided.
- Specialized mental health care will be available as an integral part of the health services delivery system.
- Caregiver support will be a priority.
- Services to address cognitive impairment will be available, accessible and affordable for affected older adults and their families and caregivers.

Communications

Vision: *Montgomery County will distribute and publicize recognizable, understandable, timely, and accessible information on County and public resources and services for older adults.*

- Information will be understandable and accessible by older adults and their caregivers in diverse ethnic population groups
- Information will clearly state who is eligible for services at no cost and who is eligible at specified costs.
- Information for older adults will be branded uniformly for consistency and recognizable identification
- The County will use and publicize multiple media to disseminate information relevant to older adults, including social media, its regularly updated website and a 24/7 information resource line.

Employment

Vision: *Montgomery County will recognize the extent and value of the contribution of older adults to the economy.*

- The County will encourage County agencies and private companies to offer employment opportunities as older adults transition to retirement.
- The County will encourage job fairs, partnerships, and forums to help older adults prepare themselves to continue in or reenter the workforce and find jobs.
- The County will provide information that promotes the value of older workers.

Security and Safety

Vision: *Montgomery County will provide physical, financial, and technological protection and safety for older adults.*

- The County will expand its police and fire safety programs targeted toward older adults.
- The County will educate both older adults and their caregivers about the potential for financial crimes, including telephone and computer scams.
- The County's Ombudsman Program will increase its monitoring of the safety of group homes and assisted living facilities.
- The County will work to assure legal protection from financial exploitation of older adults. ■



FY11 Committee Activities

AGING IN PLACE AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

The Aging in Place and Community Committee (AIPC) is charged with examining issues involving aging and the choice to remain in one's home, regardless of safety concerns and ability to maintain the home due to aging. This past year the Committee collected background information about transportation and mobility issues and what might be done to improve availability and accessibility of transportation for the County's seniors.

The Committee learned that the decision to "give up the keys" can be one of the most traumatic events in an individual's life; it can contribute to depression, loss of socialization, fewer trips to the doctor and religious functions, and half as many trips for shopping and eating out. This lack of social contact has been found to be highly detrimental to physical and mental well-being.

Although there are about 150 transportation providers in Montgomery County, transportation is a significant challenge for many older adults. In addition to a lack of knowledge about available services, the Committee learned of many other barriers affecting the ability of older residents to stay in their homes. These include transportation costs, the need to schedule rides weeks in advance, fear of getting lost, concerns over safety, struggles with carrying packages, and the inability to get to and from public transportation. Nonprofit providers are challenged to provide an ever-growing demand for transportation services due to lack of adequate staff, funding, and persistent difficulty recruiting drivers and volunteers.

The Committee met with several business and nonprofit transportation providers to discuss their services and examine different models, driver training programs, and other best practices. In addition, the Committee examined transportation plans of nearby Fairfax and Howard Counties as possible templates for Montgomery County. Transportation will remain a main focus in the upcoming year, with the goal of proposing a County-wide plan and advocating for short-term solutions, including ways to retrofit the suburbs to make mobility easier for older adults.



Commissioners Myrna Cooperstein and Grace Whipple

Toward the end of the year, the AIPC also began to explore the issue of "purpose-built senior housing" with discussion and speakers. The Committee plans to further examine the topic of affordable housing in the coming year.

COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH COMMITTEE

The year 2011 was active for the Committee on Communication and Community Outreach as members reviewed County publications for seniors for graphic and content consistency, expanded outreach to stakeholders, began a focus on communication to seniors in diverse communities, and extended the reach of the COA's cable television show, "Seniors Today."

Following a County press conference with Health and Human Services Director Uma Ahluwalia and Commission Chair Elaine Binder on the "Graying of Montgomery County," the Commission cited data about the growing senior population in testimony, meetings, and other communications.

The Committee sought to improve County publications for seniors with graphic standardization reflecting the County's diversity and greater consistency in substance. The concern was that information for seniors developed by the County should have a consistent appearance and feel so that older residents could readily recognize and use County publications to find resources they need. Efforts also were made to obtain private funding to expand printing of County publications for seniors.

During the year, the Commission placed a priority on the needs of older adults in Montgomery County's diverse communities because of the large share of the State's diverse population residing in the County. For example, 58 percent of the State's Asian seniors (age 65+) and almost 57 percent of the State's Hispanic seniors reside in Montgomery County.

All committees of the Commission were tasked with including as one aspect of their work the needs of seniors in the increasingly diverse County. Committee explored current County diversity outreach activities and development of a statistical profile of Montgomery County diversity to better clarify the needs of old adults in specific diverse groups.



Another primary concern of the Committee is the COA's relationships with Stakeholder organizations. The Commission held a meeting with Stakeholders in February 2011; the Committee recommended also inviting Stakeholders to attend Summer Study sessions and committee meetings and to stay informed by the Commission's Web site:

www.montgomerycountymed.gov/coa. Stakeholders did join the Commission in refining recommendations made by Summer Study groups on issues in Housing and Mental Health.

In the latter part of 2011, the Committee started to plan for its 2012 Stakeholder meeting, and focused on the needs of seniors in diverse communities. The Committee also worked to broaden the County list of Stakeholders to include the business community and organizations representing and serving seniors in diverse communities. At the Committee's recommendation, the Commission initiated action to have individual Commissioners reach out as speakers and participants in groups that relate to seniors. One member of the Committee, Morton Davis, received an award from a Muslim Community Center for the information he provided about both the Commission and safety for seniors.

The COA produces a monthly cable television program, *Seniors Today*. This year, substantial progress was made in increasing the visibility and exposure of *Seniors Today*. A special Task Force was appointed to focus on programming for this series. Programs covered issues important to the seniors of Montgomery County such as financial fraud, hearing loss, how to use social networking (Facebook, Twitter), hoarding, low-cost healthy meals, the County's Agricultural Fair, and employment, among others.

The Commission recommended that the County seek to broaden the exposure of the program by providing DVDs to senior centers, retirement communities, and other congregate settings, and by linking the program to the County website for seniors (www.montgomerycountymd.gov/senior) and to YouTube. As a result, the County's Office of Public Information has undertaken a series of activities that make the programs more visible and accessible for seniors: linking *Seniors Today* to YouTube, distributing *Seniors Today* DVDs to selected retirement communities; and issuing media releases announcing the programs. *Seniors Today* airs on Montgomery County Cable TV (Sundays at 2:00 pm, Tuesdays at 6:00 pm, and Fridays at 8:00 pm) and on the County Government Senior website

HEALTH AND WELLNESS COMMITTEE

The Health and Wellness Committee started the year with the addition of two new members. Considering the breath and complexity of the issues that the Committee continues to focus, they were welcome additions.

In 2011, the Committee continued to focus on the development of the Healthy Montgomery website formerly known as CHIP, End of Life Care, Medicare changes, the impact of the Affordable Care Act of 2009 on seniors and discharge planning. In addition, due to concerns raised in the past year, the Committee decided to focus more closely on mental health services for seniors. Another area of concern requiring new focus was falls prevention. A Falls Prevention Workgroup was established and included members of the Committee, HHS staff, and the Primary Care Coalition of Montgomery County.

Significantly, this year the Committee was able to participate in several End-of Life events and activities as a result of the recommendations made during an earlier COA Summer Study. On behalf of the COA, Tammy Duell, Co-Chair of the Health and Wellness Committee, testified at State Senate hearings in support of Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (MOLST). The bill eventually passed both legislative branches, with implementation still pending. As a result of the Committee's efforts, the County Council and County Executive created a proclamation in April in recognition of National Healthcare Decisions Day. Committee members also supported the screening of the film "Consider the Conversation" in Silver Spring. The COA was a cosponsor of this highly successful event.

Due to the complexity of the issues surrounding Mental Health Services, the Committee submitted a Summer Study proposal that was approved by the COA. Details about this Summer Study appear elsewhere in this Report. In 2011 the Committee will continue to focus on these issues as well as other concerns related to the health and wellness Montgomery County's seniors.

PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

The Public Policy Committee leads the Commission's efforts in public policy advocacy at all levels of government: County, State and federal.

State. During the 2011 State legislative session, the Public Policy Committee and other members of the

(Continued on page 12)



Montgomery County Commission on Aging



Senator Nancy King

Commission were active in Annapolis in support of three bills that passed and became law:

- Communities for a Lifetime, which calls for a comprehensive, strategic State plan to address aging-in-place preferences of seniors

and also provides resources to communities that facilitate the independence of seniors;

- Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment, which enables the conversion of individual patient goals and preferences regarding end-of-life care into medical orders that are transferable between settings and institutions; and
- A bill to exempt publicly funded senior centers from providing personal information about participants in response to requests under freedom-of-information laws.

The Commission is proud that it either initiated or gave major shape to all three bills. The Commission appreciates the work of the delegates and senators who pushed these bills through the General Assembly.

The Commission supported two bills that did not pass, but we expect that they will be introduced again—one on seizure and forfeiture of property obtained by financial exploitation, and one on creation of a permanent absentee ballot list.

The Public Policy Committee organized the Commission's legislative breakfast for State senators and delegates from Montgomery County. Thirteen of our legislators attended. The breakfast meeting was a valuable opportunity for the Commission and the elected officials to discuss legislative initiatives relating to seniors.

County. Members of the Commission met with each member of the County Council, orienting them to the needs of the County's seniors and urging adequate funding for essential safety-net services for seniors. As a result of these visits, the Council not only maintained the safety-net but restored a proposed \$100,000 cut in Home Care Services.

The Public Policy Committee arranged a meeting of several key Commission members with Rollin Stanley, Director of the Montgomery County Planning

Department, to explore how zoning and planning impacts seniors, especially in the areas of housing and transportation.

Federal. Led by the Public Policy Committee, the Commission sent several letters to Montgomery County's U.S. representatives and senators about federal issues, notably budget priorities.

Other. The Public Policy Committee has held a series of meetings with local financial institutions to explore steps that might reduce financial exploitation of seniors. ■



Delegates Ariana Kelly and Bonnie Cullison



Paul Del Ponte, Morton Davis,
and Spencer Schron





Stakeholders Meeting

The Commission on Aging (COA) reaches out to groups and organizations that provide services to or advocate for seniors in Montgomery County. The Commission refers to these groups and organizations as Stakeholders. The partnership between the COA and Stakeholders results in a more unified voice to influence County decisions concerning seniors. The Commission meets with Stakeholders at least annually and Stakeholders attend Commission, Committee, and Summer Study Group meetings.

The Commission on Aging hosted a Stakeholders meeting in February 2011 to build on the foundation developed at the 2010 meeting. Fifty-four organizations attended. COA Chair, Elaine Binder, discussed the Commission's "Call for Action," which first emerged at the previous year's Stakeholders meeting. It was subsequently sent to all candidates for County office asking for a commitment to build a comprehensive vision and agenda for seniors—one that considers the County's geographic, economic, and cultural diversity. Also noted was the importance of a combined commitment to older adults to strengthen the County's ability to become a Community for a Lifetime.

Participants discussed how to become a unified voice; responses included:

- Expand our message statewide;
- Continue advocacy on a statewide basis for senior issues;
- Emphasize the economic contributions of seniors;
- Incorporate the slogan: "Remember: Seniors Count."
- Focus efforts on the County Council, particularly in the area of planning;
- Resend the COA's "Call to Action" to members of County Council'
- Develop and achieve goals with measurable outcomes;
- Encourage seniors and nonprofit senior service organizations to speak individually at County Council sessions and write letters; and
- Emphasize the importance of not cutting funding for senior services.

It is hoped that these efforts will result in a united voice and consistent message representing all of our interests and a coordinated plan that supports seniors. This consistent message can be presented at appropriate County Council hearings and functions, State functions, and other public venues where senior interests must be heard and leveraged. The goal is that seniors must be

recognized as a coordinated, viable, public interest group with policy interests and influence, and that it will use its power to improve and protect the interests and programs for seniors. The slogan "Remember: Seniors Count" must be emphasized.

Discussions with Stakeholders led the Commission to draft the proposed "Growing Older in Montgomery County: an Agenda," referred to as "A Community for a Lifetime: A Proposal for a Senior Agenda." This document encompasses concerns for seniors in the areas of transportation, housing, socialization and leisure, health and wellness, communications, employment, and security and safety. It is the Commission's hope that the "Senior Agenda" will be adopted by the County Executive, and endorsed by the County Council, and that County Departments will develop plans to implement it.

Stakeholders were encouraged to participate in Summer Study Groups and Commission Committee meetings. Their participation in Commission Summer Study Groups has been substantial, and their attendance at Committee meetings has been growing. This expertise and experience enhanced the scope and value of the recommendations generated by the Summer Study Groups.

The Commission is optimistic that through past, present, and future coordinated activities with Stakeholders, older adults in Montgomery County will benefit from highlighted interest in issues affecting them. ■



John Honig, Elaine Binder, Delegate Susan Lee, Judy Welles, Vivien Hseuh, and Jack Sprague



FY11 Summer Studies Work Groups

At the COA's Annual Meeting in May, Commissioners decided to undertake a study of housing policy in the County as it affects our seniors. The goals of this Summer Study were to:

- Study the Special Exception Zoning process for approval of Accessory apartments for determining the validity of an expedited approval process for this housing option; and
- Study the voluntary Montgomery County Visit-Able and Live-Able program to determine whether or not the programs should be strengthened or become mandatory.



COA at work: Joseph Petrizzo, Barbara Mulitz, Mona Ngem and Shawn Brennan

Commission for People with Disabilities and the Maryland National Capital Home Builders Association presented their organizations' viewpoints on these topics. During the last Housing Summer Study session, participants reviewed information gathered in the two previous sessions and developed a set of recommendations for

Commission consideration. The following Housing Summer Study recommendations were approved unanimously by the full Commission at its September meeting:

Commission member Leslie Marks chaired this study. Thirteen Commission members participated, along with representatives from the County's Department of Housing and Community Affairs, the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNPPC), the Commission on People with Disabilities, the Maryland National Capital Builders Industry Association, Easter Seals, and representatives from the offices of Montgomery Council members Nancy Floreen and Marc Erlich.

During three summer meetings, participants learned definitions for the terms *Design for Life*, *Visit-Able*, and *Live-Able* as they relate to housing and became educated about the zoning process and procedures. At the first meeting, Jennifer Wise from the Montgomery County Planning Board educated participants about the zoning rewrite process and explained the benefits and drawbacks of allowing development of accessory apartments without going through the Special Exception process, which can be complex, lengthy, and expensive. A representative from the County's Department of Housing and Community Affairs also offered expertise about the approval process at that meeting.

During the second meeting, participants studied the Design for Life program, the voluntary Visit-Able and Live-Able housing program to make housing accessible to all. Representatives from the

- Approve housing issues for seniors in Montgomery County as a priority for the coming year;
- Support an expedited process to make approval of accessory apartments less costly and less time consuming; and
- Continue to support the voluntary Design for Life program for Visit-Able and Live-Able apartments. Encourage broad-based education and public relations initiatives to enhance a more robust program.

Housing Task Force. Following the Housing Summer Study and Commission approval of its recommendations, COA Chair Elaine Binder appointed a small COA Task Force to:

- Provide COA input to the upcoming rewrite of the County's Housing Policy being written by the Department of Housing and Community Affairs at the request of the County Executive and for approval by the County Council.
- Support Commission participation, to the extent appropriate, on issues relating to the upcoming changes in the zoning laws being recommended by the MNCPPC; and
- Make recommendations about the appropriate role of the COA in housing policy and program changes under consideration.



During the fall, this Task Force met with appropriate representatives from MNCPPC and the County's Department of Housing to review proposed revisions to both housing and zoning policy to provide them with information from the COA's Senior Agenda and the COA's position on issues related to housing for older adults. The Task Force also met with the President of Victory Housing, a nonprofit developer of affordable senior housing, to learn the organization's view of the development process for affordable senior housing. The Task Force developed COA testimony for a public hearing on revisions to the Montgomery County Housing Policy. It concluded with a report and a series of recommendations for further Commission consideration that promote the COA's continuing interest, involvement, and advocacy for housing programs for seniors in our County.

Mental Health Summer Study

The Commission on Aging (COA) met over the summer to study mental and behavioral health services for older adults who reside in Montgomery County. Joining the COA were representatives from the Commission on Health, The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, The Montgomery County Mental Health Association and Montgomery County government and non-government groups

In addition to learning about some of the existing programs and resources for seniors, workgroup members reviewed barriers and challenges to providing mental health care for older adults, discussed practices and strategies to improve care, and developed recommendations.

The purpose of this study was to learn more about Montgomery County's specialized mental health services for older adults. Two distinct areas of concern emerged:

- 1) people with *acute* psychiatric mental illness; and
- 2) people with *situational* mental health issues.

At the conclusion of the study, group members made recommendations focusing on education, funding, and legal considerations. Specific recommendations to the full Commission included the following:

- Endorse mental health as a priority and approve continuation of this important work in the Health and Wellness Committee;
- Advocate for development of programs for older

adults that promote wellness and prevention including nutrition, exercise, and feelings of "usefulness."

- Advocate for funding for senior mental health and support programs and services that promote social connectedness, leisure time activities, volunteerism, and intergenerational activities;
- Approve collaboration with State licensing bodies to provide information (via mail or email) to County providers related to mental health and older adults; and
- Approve collaboration with the Public Policy Committee to address the legal recommendations of the workgroup.

At the full September COA meeting, a motion was made and unanimously accepted to make Mental Health a COA priority for the coming year. The Health and Wellness Committee will add mental health to its agenda and follow up on the recommendations from Summer Study. ■

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Please call 240-777-3000 or dial 311



Isiah Leggett, Montgomery County Executive

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